

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**SHIFTING GEARS PROJECT
NORTH ADAMS**

INFORMANT: EVELYN L. JONES

INTERVIEWER: ANNETTE GAMACHE

DATE: MAY 18, 1988

PLACE: 58 QUINCY STREET, NORTH ADAMS, MA

A = ANNETTE

E = EVELYN

SG-NA-T022

Tape begins with prelude from interviewer:

...This is Annette Gamache working with Winifred Carnigan, interviewing Evelyn Jones on May 18, 1988 at Winifred's home at 18 Quincy Street, North Adams, Ma. through The Shifting Gears Sprague Oral History Project.

A: Okay. Um, we're going to start with your grandparents. Um, what were their names?

E: Okay. My grandparents were [Gazene Cott?] and [George Fonsby?]. She was born Gazene Cott in Holland. And when she come over here she met George Fonsby and she married him. And uh, she's got quite a list of children that she had there. I think she had thirteen children. And of course my mother was one of them. Uh, I don't know where my mother was on the list. She was suppose to be um, I didn't think about that part. Maybe I got it here. Well anyway, they settled in Castleton on the Hudson in New York State. [Sound of ruffling papers] Oh yeah, here they are. My mother was one, two, three, four, five, six, my mother was the seventh child. Oh I never realized that! Uhm. Think she wasn't born on the seventh though. [Both laugh]

A: Um, your grandparents, did they both live here? Or your grandmother came from Holland, did you grandfather come from another country?

E: Uh, no. His parents did though. His parents came from Holland. Uh, where did I find that. Yeah, his parents came from Holland and when? 1773 his parents came here.

A: Do you know what they did for work? Do you know what they were?

E: Uh, my grandfather worked in an ice house. So you can imagine how long ago that was.

Well I'm no kid. So I mean, you know. My grandfather he worked in an ice house along the Hudson River. That's when it was nice and clean. Not now. They used to cut ice and store it for the summer.

A: Um, what about your parents? What were their names?

E: Uh, of course my mother was Elida Fonsby and she was born in Castleton. You want the date of that? [A: Um, sure] July the 28th, 1881 she was born. My father, I don't have a date for him. [A: Comment unclear] He was born in Jericho, New York I know that.

A: What's his name?

E: His name was Clarence Mizener. [Spells: M I Z E N E R] And uh, he worked on the New York Central Railroad. He was an engineer on the railroad.

A: When did, when did your family move here?

E: I'm the only one in here. [A: Oh] I'm the only one that lives here. My, my brother, my younger brother, my kid brother, I always call him my baby brother, he's 63 years old, but he's my baby brother, but he came to live with me about twenty-five years ago. But I came when I got married. That was in March, 1946 I came here.

A: Um, did you, were you raised in New York? Did you go to [unclear]?

E: Yes. I was what, twenty-two years old when I got married and I lived in West Sand Lake, New York. That's where I was born.

A: When were, when was that?

E: When was that? That was August 26, 1923. That was a few days ago too.

A: Oh. Did you have any brothers and sisters?

E: Yeah, I had five brothers.

A: What were their names in order of age?

E: Um, the oldest one was George. Then there was Clarence Jr. Then there was Elton. Then there was Wesley. And there was Donald, the one that was here.

A: Um, you moved to this area when you got married?

E: Yes.

A: Was it a big change?

E: Yes. Um, it's crazy, because I mean I lived on a farm. And my mother had of course tight, tight apron strings because I was a girl, you know? And I wasn't allowed too far away from home. So when I moved here uh, we moved in a one room apartment on Union Street and I was afraid to go down street without my sister-in-law. And, well it took me awhile to try and figure out where I could go to go down street and get back all in one day. [Both chuckle] But now I have gotten out of there and I, I range all around the place now.

A: Um, where did you go to school?

E: Uh, Admiral (--) Let me see. I went to the [unclear] School until the seventh grade. And that was in North Greenwich, New York. Then from there uh, I, it was the first time I bolted. Uh, I said my mother was paying for a central school. And I didn't know why I should be going to a one room school with all of those other grades when I could go to the school and had my own grade. My eighth grade. Well the school committee said that they wouldn't, they couldn't let me go. So I said, "I don't care what you do, I ain't going." So they said, "we won't give you a ride to the school bus", and that was two and a half miles away, the school bus. They did have a school bus picking up right near my home, but they wouldn't let me on it. But they would let me on it if I walked two and a half miles. So every morning and every night I walked the two and a half miles. And I'm the one that graduated. The two boys that didn't have the stamina enough to go against them, they, they didn't graduate.

A: You graduated from high school?

E: Uh, no. I went to high school. I started my junior year and my mother got sick. So uh, I graduated from high school when I was forty-six, because I go my GED here at McCann.

A: Um, was your church important? Is your church important to you?

E: Well not too much, because there again you had to walk for two and a half miles to go to church. Cause cars weren't that plentiful and (--)

A: So it didn't have that much of an effect on your [unclear]?

E: No, I don't think so. No.

A: Not even when you came here [unclear]?

E: I go. It's catchy here.

A: What was your first work experience that you can remember?

E: My first work experience. Okay, I worked in uh, Bayor Manning and Watervelet, New York.

A: What did you do there?

E: I made uh, parts for ignition harness for aircraft.

A: How old were you?

E: Um, eighteen I think. Seventeen or eighteen. Somewhere around there.

A: So you met your husband in New York and then you moved here? [E: Umhm] What was his name?

E: Richard Jones. [A: Um] But I didn't meet him in work. I met him on a blind date.

A: Did you really?

E: Oh I was, [chuckles] I was sneaky. [A: Um] We had, our 4H Club had more meetings than any 4H Club in the county. [Both laughs] Oh dear.

A: Um, when and when were you married? What was the date?

E: Um, March the 9th, 1946.

A: You married in New York?

E: Yeah.

A: Um, did you, well did you have any children?

E: No.

A: Um, what did your husband do when you (--)

E: When we were married?

A: Yes.

E: He worked in an [unclear] mill, woolen mill.

A: And when he came here?

E: He, well he was, he was from Hancock. He wasn't from New York State. He was from Hancock.

A: Okay. Um, okay, we'll just go on to Sprague's. Um, when did you start working at Sprague's?

E: Okay. I started September, I think it's the 15th, 1946.

A: Why, why did you go there?

E: Well I had applied every place in town, but the only references I had was from New York State. And all of the small places don't want to be interested with it. So when I went in, before I spoke to Marian Manion, I told her I wanted a job, but I said I want to start out first right off to tell you I don't have any references here in Massachusetts. They're all from New York State. So she said, "well I don't think that would bother a big, concern any." So she said, "we'll take a chance." So I guess they did. I was there almost forty-two years.

A: Um, you were the, you didn't know anybody when you went to work there?

E: No.

A: Um, well did you (--) You didn't work like in any of the textile mills around here before you went to Sprague's?

E: No, no. Sprague's the only one I worked for.

A: What was it, what was it like to learn all of the new techniques, like the machinery and stuff?

E: Well it was quite scary, because I said, I had never, I had never had a, a job like that where I had to do machinery. My other job was all on magnifying glasses and, and with pliers and stuff like that to assemble things. But this was uh, I got right in on the rolling part of it. That was, that's the first part of the capacitor industry. You have to have somebody on the rolling machine first or you don't have no product. So I had to learn to run the machines. And when I first started I started in dry rolling. And that, you had to put strips of metal in. You had to run them in and they were, they had tips that were color coated. And these tips had to be in a certain spot on that section when it was done. And if they weren't then you had to take them apart in your own time. Take a metal roller and roll out that piece of metal so you could use it again.
[Chuckles] Uh huh.

A: Oh. It sounds like really tedious work. Oh!

E: So you learned how to do it right after awhile I'll tell you.

A: I imagine you did. Um, describe (--) Well do you remember what your first day was like at Sprague's?

E: My first day. Well I thought it was going to be great, because I (--) Of course you know when, when you're watching somebody else that's been doing the job for a long time it looks like they're, they're not putting any effort in it at all. But when you get yourself on a chair and get, touch that on button you know they were working. [Both laugh] Yeah. Yeah.

A: Um, can you describe a typical day at Sprague's like within your first few weeks there?

E: Well there again I didn't know anybody. And I had to strike up friendships and, and learn my job. And of course the boss there he kept, he, he got, he new that I [unclear]. He kept calling me

country. And uh, he picked on me a lot you know. Well in fun you know, not, not mean. He was never mean. But uh, I don't know. One day I was blowing my nose and he said, "hey, he says, blow your nose on your own time. We don't have no time for that stuff here." [Laughs] Oh God!

A: Um, [E: yeah] Um, you started, what department did you start in? [E: Dry rolling] And where did you go from there?

E: That was on the top floor of Beaver Street? If you know how tall that building is? [A: Yes] You want to walk up all of them stairs every morning. [A: Uh huh, no, I don't think I do] A lot of them used to run down and go for lunch. But not me, no way! No way!

A: Um, where did you go? What other departments did you work in while you were there?

E: Well let me see now. From Beaver Street I went to uh, I went to Brown Street. And then I worked there almost all of my time. I went uh, they had a strike. And from there I went to uh, back to Beaver Street again. But when we went from uh, Beaver Street (--) No I skipped, I went to Marshall Street first. Then they had the strike. Then we went, I went to Beaver Street when they called me back, because they sent that work to Beaver Street. And from, moving it from Marshall Street they double the rates. So of course none of us could take them. None of us could make them. So I got layed off. So I was layed off for a couple months. And then they called me to Union Street. I was only at Union Street, I was temporary help at Union Street for six weeks, because they were closing that plant. So I met a lot of more people there. But then they layed me off from there. Then they called me back to Beaver Street. And then from Beaver Street I went back to uh, Brown Street. That's where I stayed.

A: Um, you were in the same department like [E: Yeah] the time that you went there?

E: Yeah. Yup. Yup.

A: Um, what was, what were the wages? Was there a difference like between men and women's?

E: Yeah. Yeah. I know I started at seventy-one cents. I don't know what the men started at, but I was started at seventy-one cents an hour. And I, when I think of the money that they make today. I mean it really (--)

A: Um, did you get raises like every, periodically?

E: Through the union's endeavor, yes. Yup.

A: Um, did you notice like any discrimination between men and women within the work place?

E: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

A: Like for instance?

E: Oh the men always got the tip jobs, always. And if there was good work and bad work the men got the good work and the girls got the bad work. I don't know. Real good. [Laughs]

A: And the men got paid more? Did the men get paid more?

E: Oh yeah. Which you should have got paid more, because you make more bonus for your good work. Got good work you can make a lot of money.

A: How were the working conditions in the beginning?

E: Well I never really had anything to object to. I mean I, I found them reasonable. I (--)

A: There was no safety precau(--). Nothing dangerous?

E: I, I never ran into anything. And I never, I never seen an accident on, on a machine or anything. But uh (--)

A: Um, how were the benefits?

E: Well they didn't start off too good, but after awhile we worked it out. The union worked. Each contract we got more, more stuff.

A: What, what did you keep getting. I mean what did they consist of?

E: Uh, a raise in your hourly pay. Raise in your health insurance. And of course when they first started there was no pension at all. And then the ICW got the pension started, but that was only fifty cents a year for the years that you put in. So a lot of these people, the older ones uh, that are out now, the ones that are in their probably seventy-five, seventy-six years old, those people aren't getting very much pension.

A: What was the ICW?

E: Independent Condenser Workers Union was it.

A: It was like the uh, IUE?

E: No, it's not like the IUE. [Chuckles]

A: I don't know what it is. I don't know what it is.

E: It was an independent union. In other words it was a company union. Whatever the company said the union did it. That's why they didn't like it when we changed to the IUE. Because then we had more power [A: uh huh] and we got the people a lot more. That's right. Hey, you have to.

A: Um, did you get, did you get many promotions while you were there?

E: No. I, I went into the union. So I mean once you got into the union, forget it. [Both laugh]

A: [Comment unclear].

E: But I did get promotion in the union. I ended up vice-president. But I mean outside of that.

A: Yeah. Um, what, how was your friendships with people that you worked with? Did you have good relations with them?

E: Yes. Yes.

A: Do you still keep in contact with them?

E: Yup.

A: Um, did you have like um, did you (--) What did you do like during your lunch hours?

E: Well a lot of them played cards. And a lot of us just sat and talked how we were going to change the world you know, as anybody does. We were going to change the whole world. We thought we could lick the whole system.

A: How?

E: You can if it takes (--) You get long enough (--) You stay there long enough you can, but I mean you don't right off.

A: Um, you didn't have any children, but the women who you worked with did some of them have chil, small children? [E: Umhm] Is there a day care at Sprague's?

E: No. Day cares, never. [A: Oops, sorry!] Never ever. [A: How silly of me] Never ever.

A: Um, well what did they do with the children?

E: They had to make arrangements on their own. Sprague didn't care. They just wanted you in to work. That's all.

A: Did they usually give hours around the children?

E: Um, they did have a shift that was on from uh, four till twelve. Four till twelve, four till eleven, something like that. A short shift. Five to eleven it was. And uh, that, most of the mothers were on that, because by the time the fathers were home to take care of the kids, but uh.

A: Um, (--)

E: Day care. Oh my got! Mr. Sprague's hair would stand on end.

A: [Laughing] Sorry I didn't mean it.

E: It would be nice.

A: As time went on you were, when did you retire?

E: Uh, a year ago April.

A: So you were there. As time went on did you notice, how did things change with the attitudes of the people? Or with their conditions or anything?

E: Well, how did they change? Well I think people new that they had more power with the bigger union. So of course they, they worked that to get higher wages and more health insurance, more pension.

A: Um, the modernization, did it make work easier, or did it make it harder?

E: Well it didn't uh (--) It's not that it made it easier or harder, it just made it less people. As of course as automation comes in that means less people. Like any department I had, on one they used to have a hundred and sixty people. When I left I was on with one other fellow. Now he's handling all by himself. The work has gone down to that capacity that he can handle them on an automatic machine. And that's where he is.

A: Um, but the new, the new kids that are (--) The new kids. The new younger people who came in, did, did they understand about like the union and stuff. Would they understand the background?

E: Not really.

A: Were they appreciative of it?

E: Not really. They, they thought this is coming to me. And what? What do you mean the union got it for me? Sprague's gave it to me. I said, "oh no. No. They didn't give you nothing that they didn't have to give you."

A: Um, did you have (--) If you were working at Sprague's did you have to join the union, or was it voluntary?

E: Uh, the last three contracts you had to join the union. Either join the union or join the agency shop. But to join the agency shop was silly, because you were paying the union anyway and you weren't getting any protection. So finally, we only had about three hold outs. And finally they decided they better, if they were going to pay that dues they might as well pay it to the union right direct and get the support.

A: So people didn't mind signing up for the union when they went there?

E: No. No. No, they know that they, they couldn't do it themselves. They had to have a union.

A: What was the hardest part of your job?

E: Leaving it. [Laughs] The hardest part of my job? I had a real good job. Uh, at first I hand rolled. That was, that was hard. But then I signed on to the automatic machine. And uh, after I learned that, piece of cake.

A: What did you have to do when you hand rolled?

E: Hand roll? [A: yeah] You had to take your [mandle?] apart. Your mandle is like a needle, it comes in two pieces. You had to take the top piece off, put your paper and foil on that. Put the top back on, make sure they're all lined up. And then get your fingers out of the way and step on the pedal. Uh huh.

A: Uh, what, what is your, what is your best memory from Sprague's?

E: I think uh, (--) A lot of people think they had terrible bosses, but I think we had great bosses. I, I got along. [unclear] I'm like a little puppy. You pet me on the head and I'm your friend for life. I mean [laughs]. But uh, I didn't have the problems a lot of other people had. They, they just didn't seem to be able to get along with people. And they were continually fighting, you know? And continually arguing. And you waste your time.

A: What is, what is uh, your worst memory of one, of a particular day, or incident.

E: I think the day I went to work on Marshall Street and there were people oh, thick thick thick. That was the first day of the strike. And I had my lunch and I'm standing there and they said, "are you going to work?" And I said, "you, you want me to walk through those people? No way!" [Both laugh] Some of them did. Some of them did. And they, they're remembered today. They're remembered today.

A: Um, do you have a particular best memory, like an incident or something?

E: Nothing, nothing spectacular. Talking about one of the worst things that I remember was when they called us together to tell us that they were moving.

A: Just recently?

E: No that was, well that was when they, what 1955? 1985?

A: When they moved out to the [unclear].

E: When they went to Lexington. When they went to Lexington. And every day you would walk through the hall. And as I said, I was the vice president of the union. So they thought I could do everything in the world for them. And I couldn't. There was nothing I could do. Hey, I

gave them as hard a time as I could. But they were moving, they didn't care. And then you walked out through those long halls and there's empty rooms there, and you wonder where are these people today. What happened to them? What kind of life are they having now? Because you knew when you had them there. You knew what they were doing. And you knew that they were taken care of and everything. But where were all of these people going to get a job? That was an awful feeling.

A: Um, you said that you didn't have any problems with your supervisors. Um, was there any particular conflict that the other people had? Was there something that (--)

E: Oh well, I was used to working hard. Because as I said, I was the only girl, and my mother thought you should keep busy. Keep a girl busy and she wouldn't get in trouble, you know. [Chuckle]

A: It sounds like my mother thinks that way.

E: Uh huh. Keep them busy and they won't get in trouble. But uh, I was used to getting, working hard, and I was used to getting along with people.

A: So mainly they just didn't get (--)

E: A lot of them didn't want to work that hard. And uh, they were in conflict all of the time. I mean (--)

A: And they blamed it on the bosses. [E: Yup. Yup] Um, let's see.

E: It end up during the end when the bosses would come to me and say, "Evelyn, we can't do this anymore. We can't do it." So I'd have to sit him down and talk to him, straighten him out.

A: Um, when the, when the strikes and stuff, you said you were layed off. How did that affect your, your family, like your home life? Did it like impair it or anything? Did it change it?

E: Well it was less money coming in. There wasn't so much (--)

A: Where was your husband working while you were at Sprague?

E: Uh, General Cable in Williamstown. [Unclear] wire. He was at that time in General Cable. Now Carol Cable. But when it got to be Carol Cable he, he retired. He quit.

A: Um, okay. We're finally at the end of this. We can talk about your union activities. Um, I know that you're pretty up in the unions. So when did you first get involved with the unions?

E: Well uh, as I said, they had a seminar for us on retirement. And they were talking when did you first become active in the community? And I, well I guess, I was fifty-two when I was elected on the executive board of the union. And uh, after that nobody could stop me.

A: Were you active before you got elected?

E: No. No. I was a very quiet hard working housewife. [A: What kinds of] But now I'm a babbling brook I guess.

A: What kinds of things did you do for the union like in the beginning?

E: In the beginning? Well at first off I had to learn what I was suppose to be doing. We had to learn all of the rules of the union, all of your by-laws. All that. Then you have to learn the rules of the state and the federal government that you have to know. Where your grounds are. When you say something you've got to know you can back it up. So uh, then we went into like negotiations for contract and that.

A: What was your first really big heated union disagreement?

E: Oh heavens! [Chuckles] That was probably with the president of the union. [Both laugh]
[A: Unclear] Ray, Ray is not a lovable little boy, but I mean uh, he's getting straightened out. After ten years with me he got straightened out.

A: Who was the president of the union?

E: Ray Bass.

A: Um, what was the first one, when you got in with the management of Sprague shall we call them.

E: Oh dear! I think there again the first, the first big fight we had was, was with Ray and a secretary.

A: What was it about?

E: Of the union. He had told her she couldn't go to a meeting and she went anyway. And she was right. She was right. He was wrong.

A: Why didn't he want her to go?

E: Because he didn't like her.

A: Well he used logic.

E: Well for the, as I say, for the first probably couple of years, the first term I was in, I was pretty quiet. I didn't, I didn't talk too much. Then uh, after that I, I knew where, I knew my laws. I knew the federal laws, I knew the state laws. And I knew then where I stood. And I got a good vote. And I knew the people were behind me. So that's when I started straightening out Ray.

A: Um, did you, did you and he disagree on a lot, or kind of did you (--)

E: Yeah. Uh, basically I think we wanted the same thing for the people. We wanted good jobs and everything for it. But his way of going at it was, wasn't my way. I mean to me if you want to get somebody to do something you don't walk up and hit him aside the head, you know? I mean that's the way he was. You've got to do this for me, but they don't have to do that. They, in the end he'd let me go and let me soften them up, and then he'd come. Gee.

A: Um, did you enjoy your union work?

E: I loved it. I loved it. Just the way I love politics. I love it!

A: Um, who (--) After you retired who took your place?

E: Mary Robert from Adams.

A: Did you give her any advice?

E: Well, she didn't think she needed any. But I understand she's about to resign. So.

A: How long did you hold the position?

E: Four years.

A: Um, (--)

E: It was ten years on the executive board, four years vice president.

A: Um, did you get, were you involved in this, in like the strikes and stuff when, when you first started working there?

E: Oh when I first started, no. They had had a strike before I went in, before I got the job there. They had a strike before that. And there was a lot of bitterness over that, but they, they went back for less than what they went out for. They went back to work. [A: Comment unclear] Yeah, well they were out a long time, long time.

A: Um, did you organize any strikes? Did you (--)

E: Me? [Laughs] [A: Yeah, you] Well in a round about way. Not, not directly. [A: How did you?] Well I know people in the mill that, uh huh.

A: Did you participate in any?

E: Yeah. We went down and helped. No matter who went on strike we went to picket for them. We always did.

A: Um, what is, what's your favorite best thing that came out of your union work?

E: Uh, I think meeting people in the state.

A: Oh, it wasn't just a local thing. It was like expanded around the state?

E: Oh, I'm telling you. All I had to do was call Boston and say, and they'd say, "who's calling please?" I said, "tell them Evelyn is calling." [Both laugh] And uh, they'd be right on the phone. I, I met, I met the Governor and I met the Secretary of Labor. I know all of them. I knew all of them.

A: Um, what is the, what's the worst thing, what's the worst thing that (--)

E: The worst thing? Uh, when I ran, when I wanted to run for president. And one of the guys on the executive board, he had a lot of power. And he said he wouldn't back me. He said he'd campaign against me. And so all of the rest of the executive board asked me not to run. And they put up Andre Martel. And then after they got Andre they knew, oh were they sorry! But uh (--)

A: Why didn't he want you to run?

E: Because I'm a woman.

A: That's the only reason? [E: Laughs] Um, you said that he didn't want you to run because you were a woman. Is he (--) That was the only argument that he had?

E: I was a woman and I was too old.

[Loud noise on tape]

A: Um, we were talking about the union and the guy who said that you couldn't run because you were a woman and you were too old. And you said that you don't get mad, you get even. [E: Right] How did you get even with him?

E: Well I waited all of the opportunities and when I could I discredited him and he was not elected again. When he ran for office again he ran for vice-president. He thought he was going to shoe-in, but he didn't.

A: You got elected over him?

E: No, this girl got elected, because I was leaving. Yeah, this girl from Adams got elected, because I was leaving. And uh, I felt good about that.

A: Um, um, you said that you had spent hours and hours negotiating and that people would take it for granted and think that Sprague's was giving them these things, but it was the union. [E: Umhm] What was a typical negotiation? Like what did you do?

E: Uh, it was sitting across (--) You know, you go in with your group and they come in with

their group, and of course we had our international Rep with us, and they had their lawyers. And we had [unclear] with them. We always did. They were, they were never prepared. Never prepared. And that's one thing I will say about Ray. If you sneezed ten years ago Ray's got it down. And you won't get away with that again, saying you didn't sneeze, because he's got it right there. And before we went into negotiations we had meetings. And we had all of our stuff all prepared. And he would say, "now what if," you know, "what if." And then we'd go and decipher that. And then he'd say, "then what if this?" You know? And so we had about five or six different ways we could go when we went in there. They didn't even have the first way to go. They just knew they had a meeting. They didn't know what they were going to do. And they would, they would cut short with (--) We'd ask questions and they'd say, "we've got to call Lexington", or wherever they had to call. And we had to wait until they went, they made a telephone call. They weren't prepared, never.

A: After a few, after a few of those meetings did they start coming more prepared?

E: Never. Never. [Both laugh] Never. They never had any women on their negotiating team either. [A: That's why] See, that's their problem. Yeah, right. No, they never had any women.

A: Um, let's see. Oh, you said that you met with the Governor. It was, it was Michael Dukakis right? [E: Uh huh, right] Um, what was your relation with him? I mean what was the (--)

E: Well he came to help the city after Sprague's laid off so many people. And we were, I was part of the Governor's task force. And uh, we were also in meetings like(--) The union, whenever we had something wrong we'd call him or we'd write him a letter. And he would answer right away. And so we got to know him real, real well. Of course the Secretary of Labor I know real well. Paul Eustis? [Unclear] And uh, even now that I'm out of the union whenever I meet him on my travels he still remembers me and I, I was amazed. Course I gave him a plaque for his, for his door. And he says, "I still got that plaque on my door." I'd say, "Oh god, I thought you'd rip that up by now."

A: I wondered, you said you were on the task force, what did you do?

E: Uh, I was in the housing group uh, with Steven Green and Tom King [A: unclear] and Henry [name unclear].

A: Did you meet any other government officials that helped you with your union work?

E: Oh yeah. They, they were all willing to help. All willing. Pat [name unclear] Uh, who else? She used to bring all of her, her staff with her. Pat used to bring her. Uh, then we met Suzy [Teagarden?] She was one of the ones that created um, between her and Paul Eustis, they created the Trading Center here.

A: Uh, did you ever meet any opposition from any Head Official? State Official?

E: No. No. Uh, as I say, I'm, I'm a very outspoken person. And they would come and zero in on me every time they came because they didn't, they wanted to know. They said, "you'll tell us

the truth." And I, well hey, I'm direct. I can't help it. That's me.

A: Um, uh, um, you were never intimidated by this?

E: No. No, as I said before, I'm like a little puppy. Once somebody pets me on the head I'm their friend for life. And I mean if (--) I don't know what they'd do to get rid of me, because I really uh, I keep track of them, I know what they're doing. And uh, I have a file at home you know, of all of my politicians that are running for President and for the Senate, for the House of Representatives, our District Representative here. I have files on everybody. [A: Do you?] Yup. So if I want to write my memoirs one of these days I can, all I've got to do is dig in the files. There they are.

A: It would be interesting memoirs. [E: Laughs] Um, how did your work affect your marriage, or your home life?

E: Well he worked the third shift and I worked days. So I don't think it helped too much. So I mean uh, by the time I got out of work I'd have to rush home. He was waiting there. He'd been down with the boys all day playing darts and pool and whatever, you know. And uh, he would be home waiting for his supper. Then he'd go to bed and I'd be sitting there. And I said, well that's why I went to night school. Because I said, all I did is we had three dogs at the time. And uh, the only ones I had to talk to was the dogs. So I said, I got sick and tired of people saying, "how are you Evelyn?" I'd say, woof, woof. Think, you know, I mean hey. So as I said, I, I (--)

A: Did he help out with like the housework and stuff?

E: No. [Chuckles] He does now though. I mean I, I layed down the law. I'm not the maid. Just because I retired I'm not the maid. So he's got his chores, my brother's got his chores and I got mine. That's it.

A: Who retired first, you or your husband?

E: He did. He's been retired almost four years.

A: So while, the last three years when you were still working did he like keep up on the stuff at home?

E: No. [Laughs] [A: Um] No, because he always thought I was a nut to keep working. But I enjoyed my job and I enjoyed working with people. I knew once I got home I'd go stir crazy, and I have. [Laughs]

A: Um, have (--) What have you done in the community since you've left?

E: Well I uh, I got elected to the, the Board of Directors of the Sprague Credit Union. I just got re-elected now for three years. And I'm also a member of Board of Directors for the CDC, The Community Development?

A: What do you do on the Credit Union ?

E: On the Credit Union I'm the clerk.

A: [Comment unclear]

E: Yup, I have to write down everything that's said. And uh, I do, I take that home and I run it through my processor and then take it down to the girl. And she puts it in the book.

A: I bet if someone sneezed you have it on record. [Both laugh]

E: Uh huh!

A: Um, what do you do on the CDC?

E: The CDC. I'm on Affordable Housing Committee there. And um, I've been going to school. We've been doing a course. We even go into Boston for Managers of the CDC to learn how to lobby our representatives and all of that.

A: Um, the depression [whispers something-cannot transcribe]. The depression [unclear]. You weren't at Sprague's, but how did that affect (--) That was before you even met your husband, the depression, right? How did that affect your life at home in New York?

E: Well [A: unclear] we lived on, we lived on a farm. So anything we ate, and we ate a lot better than a lot of these people that lived in the city. We could grow our stuff [A: umhm] , you know? And uh, so we, we made out pretty well, because we could grow our own food and everything like that.

A: Did um, any of your brothers fight in World War II?

E: Yup. Yup. I had two of them in um, let me see, yeah, two of them in World War II. Yeah.

A: Was that trying on your family?

E: Oh yeah. But uh, they both came back okay. But now, my brother developed, my youngest brother that lives with me now, he developed TB. And he was very bad for awhile. They took out one lung. But, so now he's (--) Uh, last year he had pneumonia when I, right after I retired he had pneumonia. Then this year at about exactly the same time he got pneumonia again. So the doctor told him he'd have to quit work. So. So now I handle two men. I got them on a string. [Chuckles] [A: Um] My little brother is six foot seven by the way.

A: I have a little brother who is about that size [unclear]. [Cough] Um, how, how did Sprague get different like working during one of the wars, like you worked through Vietnam. Did we, did you put a lot of new (--) Did the war help it with the weapons and such?

E: We didn't really go into too much of that. We did do some of the space work, but not too

much here. It was in the other, other plants.

A: What did they feel [unclear]?

E: We done some of the capacitors that went to the moon. And uh, but most of that was done in, out, done in another plant in another state. But uh, we did do some.

A: Um, you were, were you a real Logue reporter? [E: Yeah] How did you like that?

E: Oh I loved it.

A: Was, what was it, what did you have to do to be [unclear]?

E: Uuh! Report what you thought was interesting and not what you thought would stir up trouble, which some of them did.

A: Did you ever report on the union activities?

E: No. I wasn't in the union then. Well I was a member, but I wasn't an active person in the union then.

A: Um, you could just write about anything? You didn't really (--)

E: You could write about anything, but they said don't, don't try to meddle in somebody's family or anything like that, you know? So uh, some of them, we had one guy there that he just sat down and wrote anything that he wanted to write. And a lot of it was all up here, you know? I mean I think he fantasized what he thought happened in the plant, you know. And oh, he wasn't a reporter too long.

A: [Comment unclear] Who um, who was the, was there (--) I [unclear] try and phrase this here. Who's idea was it to come up with the Logue reporting?

E: Well they had, they had a Logue when I went to work there. So I don't know. I guess it was Marian Caron and uh, Bob Diodati, Walt Wood.

A: I was um, reading through some of them because one(--)

E: George Bateman.

A: One of the other ladies that we interviewed gave us some. And I was reading through them and they had like all kinds of stuff, but it wasn't like news, world news. It had letters home from the kids in the, guys in the war.

E: Yeah, yeah.

A: I think that was, I thought that was really neat.

E: Yeah.

A: Um, did you have any [unclear] towards the Logue? [Comment unclear]

E: Well I was always, I was always (--) We had skits. Once a year they used to have a party for us. And we had skits. And I was always the one in a bathing suit or whatever, you know? Hey, somebody has to be the clown.

A: Um. Um, did the wars, well the Vietnam War, did that affect your employment any? I mean that didn't make your job harder, or easier? Did it drop more responsibility?

E: No, because we weren't involved in making anything for that. We weren't involved in making anything for that. We had a few of the kids that went, but um, it wasn't that much of a hardship.

SIDE ONE ENDS

SIDE TWO BEGINS

A: Um, you started working in the fifties?

E: Forty, in the forties.

A: You started working in the forties? How was the changing (--) I mean I already asked you about the modernization and stuff, but as things got more and more modern did it become less and less personal?

E: Yeah, oh yeah.

A: Did you enjoy the work as much?

E: [Sigh] Well in the end my, really, to say I held a job, I didn't hold it. I hold a union job in the end, because I worked probably five hours a day for the union. So my job uh, was, I just reported in the morning in there. It wasn't that hard for me. But I liked my job, because as I said, I couldn't understand my machines. And one of the bosses was standing there and we were talking. I had my back to my machine and we were talking along. "And I said, ooh, wait a minute, my machine broke." And he said, "how do you know, you got your back to them?" I said, "I know." I knew every machine by their sound. And I could tell if they didn't make a certain sound at a certain time there was something wrong..

A: Um, before the machines did you like, when you went around did you know most of the people or had you seen them?

E: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

A: But as the machines came on, did that change, came in, did that change?

E: Oh sure, because you had to do more work. You had to be there with your machine. You had to do more work because your machine was automatic and of course they changed the rates. The automatic could probably do maybe ten times more than what the hand roller could do and hour.

A: Did the wages change greatly [unclear]?

E: The wages didn't change that much. No.

A: Did the wages change for the best?

E: Some, because they were of course uh, a lot of women aren't mechanical. I fortunately was, because I, I learned on the farm. I learned how to do machinery. But a lot of women are not mechanical, where most men are. And I don't know, it's just born in them I guess. But most men can fix the machine quick and where a women is waiting for somebody to come. She has to wait for the guy from the machine shop, or this that. And uh, that makes it harder. And you don't make that much money when you're on down time.

A: Did you ever work on an assembly line?

E: Uh, very rarely. Very rarely. No, mine, mine was a beginners job of rolling.

A: Most of the women were put on assembly lines though?

E: Yeah, yup.

A: And the men did the quote (--)

E: Yeah. But see, when we were at, when we were at Beaver Street that's where I first started on the automatic roller. But we had group bonus. That meant there was three of us in a group and we pulled all of our, our rolling. So when we went to Brown Street the one guy that came with me, he said uh, "I want individual bonus." He says, "I'm not carrying her anymore." But it ended up that I had more money than he did, because I made more bonus than he did. Oh! He could never figure it out.

A: What is, what is bonus?

E: Bonus? Well, that's making pieces per hour. You have a certain rate that they give you. One is base rate and one is through your percentage. And like if you can double your base rate you're making about a ninety percent bonus, which is good money.

A: Um, you had like, did you have like a quota to fill? Like you had to make a hundred parts a

day or a week?

E: Yeah, you had to do your base rate. Oh yeah!

A: And if you didn't do it did they take it out of your bonus and put it in (--)

E: Well it would be, sure it would be used against you. Sure. [A: comment unclear] If you didn't make your base rate (--) Now say you had a bad day, you, you busted your butt to make base rate because that really really put you way down if you didn't make base rate.

A: What would happen if you didn't do it? Did they take it out of bonus and put it in?

E: Yeah. Well they'd cut down on your bonus. Yeah, it was (--) Say you made bonus, say you made 50% the day before but you couldn't make bonus the next day. Well then they average them two together. You know, well there goes your bonus.

A: Is there a lot of pressure in the job to make bonus?

E: With bonus, yeah. Yeah, there's a lot of pressure.

A: Did anybody like just not care about bonus and just do it, just do base rate?

E: Well a lot of people when we got the automatics uh, this guy again, and I'm not giving no names here, he says, he said, "I'm taking credit for everything that comes off of that machine whether it's good or not." I said, "no way." I couldn't live with myself that way. And I still made more bonus than he did by doing it right than he did by throwing half his stuff in the trash barrel. But uh, I could never live with myself that way.

A: Um, let's see. Did the benefits change as time went on?

E: Oh yeah, oh yeah. Yeah, see when I, when they first started with the pension it was fifty cents for each year up to thirty years. So you know what that gave you. Fifteen box. So that's what a lot of them people as I say, there are seventy-five, seventy-six, they're only getting about fifteen dollars a month per pension. So uh, now uh, when I left it was thirteen dollars a year. So that's kind of a big raise. And now I guess they got fifty cents more, plus they got the cap up two years. Now you'll get paid for thirty-two years.

A: Oh um, do you still keep up with the union activities?

E: I in a, in, in a way. In a way.

A: Do they, do they come to you and say, [E: sometimes] "here's a problem, what would you do?"

E: Have you got any back up on this, or back up on that?

A: Um, the working conditions as the machines came in, did it get more and more dangerous and unsafe?

E: Yeah, because a lot of times your machine (--) Like the machines that I was running when I left was something like uh, thirty by forty years old. Maybe more. They uh, they uh, were worn out. And the people that made those machines didn't make repair parts on them anymore. So you had to figure out how you were going to keep that machine running without getting a new part. So we, we laughed because we said we ran, we ran the machines on rubber bands and paper clips. We did! We did.

A: Were there strict safety rules?

E: Not really. Not really.

A: Was it well supervised?

E: Not really there either. Well with me I always, I hate to have somebody hanging over my shoulder like I'm, I'm an idiot. I mean tell me what you want me to do and then leave, go. That's what I always told them. [Chuckles] And they did!

A: Um, was everything like well organized and always [unclear], everything was nice and set?

E: No. No. [Laughs]

A: What was an example of when they were so disorganized it got all mixed up?

E: You never never could depend on what you were going to be doing the next time. Uh, like I always like to try to get my jobs lined up. And uh, they'd say, "well, we don't know yet, we don't know what we need." But you have to have your material. And like I always balance my material. You'd of had like a +0, -1, +1. You balanced your set-up so it would be a nominal set-up. I always did that. And uh, my sections always read. The girl at [unclear] she said, "your sections read the same every time." I said, "that's good, I want them that way." But the other ones I could never get them to do that. Whatever they put their hand on, they put it on that machine. And their sections would be going up and down. And they were always changing their machine. Put (--) Take it down. Take off two turns. Put on two turns. I mean, that's silly!

A: Did it get better or worse as time went on?

E: Worse. Worse because um, they, they expected one supervisor to supervise a lot of people. And they were having, they were changing people all the time and uh, they're getting new people in, you know? And there was no time to train the people right. And uh, people were just trying to learn as they went along. And it made it hard.

A: Um, the new people that were coming in, did they like have "attitude problems." Were they like, think they were superior?

E: No. They just thought that they done what they could and whatever. If it was wrong, that's too bad, that's your problem. You didn't tell me. You didn't tell me that. Yeah, okay!

A: Um, in the late(--). You got really involved by 1970, you were really involved with the union. [E: Umhm] Um, what was (--). Did you hold any (--). What was (--). How do you hold elections [unclear]?

E: How do you hold an election?

A: Yeah, do they have it like in the thing? They send little ballots around? Or how do they do that?

E: Well actually it's almost like your, your uh, your district election here. I mean your city election.

A: Is the [unclear] private ballot?

E: It's a printed, it's a printed ballot and it's uh [A: secret ballot]. You got a, you got a ballot box and they all go in that. Then those ballot boxes they got locks on. And they're not opened until they're up in the union office to count. And then they unlocked them in front of (--). You could have an observer for every person so that they know that they're not getting cheated and you're not throwing their ballots in the barrel that you'd come to them if you didn't like them, throw their ballots away. You couldn't do that.

A: Did you have somebody who wasn't involved with the union at all count the ballot?

E: Uh, no. The election, the election committee they hired, they elect an election committee in May before they take the names down of the people that are going to run for office. They elect an election committee and then they're in charge of the election from then on in. The printing of the ballots. The nomination meetings and all that.

A: Um, were you involved in the strike in 1970?

E: Umhm.

A: What was your part in it?

E: I picketed.

A: Um, what (--). Did you (--). What were you (--).

E: I picketed and of course I was a big mouth as usual. I, I could, I could yell scab from Marshall Street to the corner of Main. [Both laugh] They used to be at the corner of Main shaking their fist at me. I was a sweet girl, really. Really.

A: What was a scab in the union?

E: What is a scab? [A: Yeah] Somebody that crosses the picket line and does your job while you're on the street. [A: Um, uh, what was] Be they man or women! [Both chuckle]

A: Um, did you get what you wanted to from that strike? [E: Yup] Well what did you want?

E: We wanted more money, more benefits, more pension, more, more health insurance.

A: Did you get everything?

E: Yup. [Both laugh] [Coughs]

A: How do you (--) Well you were union leader, but how, when you were union leader how did you feel about the ones who [unclear]?

E: Well I never really thought that much about it I mean, till I got involved in it. [A: did you think that you'd?] But to me I think everybody should be involved in their union for at least one term, in some kind of a union office and then they understand the people that are on that committee.

A: Um, did you think that they did enough for the company?

E: Do I think they did enough for the company? [A: Yeah] I hope they didn't do anything for the company. [Laughs]

A: [Comment unclear]. I mean for the workers each time, for the workers any? Did they do a lot for the workers?

E: Well there again you can't really gauge people's feelings, because a lot of people thought they ought to get two dollar an hour raise instead of fifty cents an hour raise, you know? And hey, how do you figure it out? You get the best you can. And I mean there's a lot of horse trading, there's a lot of horse trading.

A: Um, what? You were a picketer in 1970. What happened to you? I mean did anything (--) When you went back to work what was the (--)

E: What happened to me? Nothing.

A: Yeah, or nothing happened to anybody?

E: Only the scabs. They, they, and no one, they weren't, they weren't liked very well.

A: I imagine they weren't.

E: And even today sometimes when somebody's name comes up they say, "oh that was a scab!" Yeah.

A: You remember all of the (--) You remember the names of the people who were scabs? Did that have (--) That must be a great thing to have hanging over your head [both laugh-rest of comment unclear].

E: Yeah, yup, yup, uh huh. And I was really uh, I never held it against people like a lot of them did. Because I figures um, especially one lady I had that uh, she didn't have any husband and she had a little girl. And uh, there was no money coming in. I mean I don't blame her! And in the end I, I was called on to help her. And they said uh, "no way." And I said, "wait a minute now." "This person has worked hard and they, they haven't caused any trouble and they need help. That's what we're here for." So I, I was able to help her.

A: Uh, after the strike of '70 did things change with everything, everybody [unclear]?

E: No, because there was a lot of bad feeling with the strike. Of course the company had cameras all over the place taking our pictures. And they'd say, "why you're one of the ones that was picketing at such and such a place," you know? You talk about me having a trial. We had a file to.

A: Were the workers, were the workers split on the strike? [E: Yup, yup] Badly?

E: For awhile. For awhile. But (--)

A: Then they all came together and picketed. [E: Yeah, yeah] How long did this strike last?

E: Some of them didn't picket at all, because they, they wouldn't support the strike at all. But they all took the raise.

A: Yeah, [unclear]. [Both laugh]

E: They all took the raise though. [A: Well of course] Nobody wanted to get a punch in the nose, but they all took the raise.

A: How long did it last? The strike?

E: What was it, ten weeks? Something like that. Uh huh.

A: What did you, I mean what did you do for money during those ten weeks?

E: I got uh (--) Well of course my husband was working. He didn't work at Sprague's. A lot of people had it real bad because both the husband and wife worked at Sprague's. So alls they got was their picket money, [A: How much was that?] which was twenty dollars a week. So [A: unclear] that would bring them in forty dollars a week. But if they both worked at Sprague's they did go on welfare.

A: Um, you didn't (--) The people who didn't participate in the strike, but who, who didn't got to

work either, they couldn't collect like unemployment or anything like that? They couldn't?

E: No, no no.

A: Well how did those people survive if they weren't getting picket money and they weren't getting paid?

E: Well they must have survived somehow, they all got back. I don't know. They must have had good relatives I guess. I don't know.

A: Uh, um, okay, when did you leave Sprague again?

E: Last April. A year ago April. '87.

A: You retired. How did you feel about that. [E: Terrible!] Did, did, was it your choice to retire, or was it a mandate (--)? [E: no] It was mandatory?

E: No. [Laughs] My husband didn't want me to work. And for the last two years that I worked he really harangued me. He wanted me to get out of there. And I kept telling him that I enjoyed my job, but he enjoyed retirement. And I still say that I should have stayed working, because I really enjoyed myself there. But to be uh, well of course he, he had a major operation last summer. So that would have ran me into a little problem. I would have had to take a leave anyway. But um, I just don't like being home all of the time. And he can't understand it. Now he was taking a nap when I left. He doesn't know where I am. He has no idea where I am and then he'll be blowing his head off when I get home.

A: Um. Um, is, oh is there a mandatory (--)? Is there or was there a mandatory retirement age at Sprague's? [E: No] There never ever was?

E: I guess, oh years ago I guess it was 65 was it? But now you can work till 90 if you can stand up. But I, I really would have liked to have stayed at least until 70.

A: Um, how was, how were the benefits, the pension benefits?

E: Right now they're pretty good. Pretty good.

A: Um, are they adequate enough to take care of you and your husband?

E: Yeah, I mean if you work up until you're, you're 63, 64, somewhere like, you get a good pension. Of course if I worked till 65 I would have got more. But uh, I, I, I manage well.

A: Um, when you look back at your time spent at Sprague's how do you feel about it?

E: I enjoyed myself. [Chuckles] And it went very fast as far as that goes. I just couldn't believe that 41 years had gone by since I stood with my hat in my hand and asked for a job at Sprague Electric. I just couldn't believe it went that fast.

A: If you could go back to when, 41 years ago and start again would you change anything that you did?

E: If I was the person I am now, probably.

A: What would you change?

E: But I was very quiet then and very, whatever they threw at me I took.

A: Well supposing that you, the person you are now could go back, what would you change?

E: Now, now if they told me, "yes and you've got to do that job!" No way! They don't tell me anymore. You ask a person to do a job, you don't tell them. No way. I'm no servant. No way. [Chuckles]

A: Um, when you stopped (--)

E: That all happened when I was fifty-two years old. [Both laugh]

A: When you stopped, when you stopped working there everything had changed. Had a lot of your friends already retired before you?

E: Yeah, because when, the first department I was in on Brown Street they were all at least ten years older than I was. I was the baby of the department. So they'd meet me on Main Street and they said, "did you retire yet?" I said, "no." "My God when are you going to retire?" I said, "you forget I was the baby. You people were all old and you left." I mean you know. So I mean uh, "I still got to work," you know? I mean. "Oh my God, we didn't realize it." Oh hey, what are you going to do. That's the way it is.

A: Um, how do you feel about, about Sprague and it's management and it's runners and the people who own it?

E: Hm, what kind of language do you want me to say it in?

A: Hey, I'm not sensitive.

E: I don't think, I don't think they treated to people right. I, and I don't, I think they're getting just what they deserve. They're, they're practically on a bus. They don't have anyplace to put their typewriters down today. I mean there they are. They, they left here and they left the people in a lurch. They went down to Lexington. They thought they were going to be big frogs in a little pond. But they found out they're only little frogs in a big pond. And now the frogs are chasing them for their legs now.

A: How do you feel about them moving?

E: Terrible. Terrible, but I think in the long run it's going to be good for the city. Because everybody was scared before. Nobody can come here because Sprague Electric will move out. And now who the hell cares? They only employ two hundred and ninety people. [A: That's right] Who cares now? But I think that they should never allow a big concern again. Two hundred and ninety people is good, that's good. We can handle that. We can take care of these people if they decide to fly by night. But uh, anything bigger than that it's really devastating. You can't handle it.

A: So if another big industry came in and started employing thousands of our people, you wouldn't approve?

E: I don't think they'd over the trail. [Both laugh] I don't think so. I don't think you'll ever see again a concern with thousands of people.

A: No even Mass MoCA?

E: No. [A: I wouldn't know of any (unclear)] No. Mass MoCA is talking about six hundred, seven hundred people. No. Um, and most of them are going to be people that are trained in the art world. So all we can figure on Mass MoCa is the trickle down.

A: What do you think Sprague's overall impact on the community has been? Good, bad?

E: Well I think for awhile they were very good. They were all involved in the community. They were all working for the community. And then they started pulling out. And I guess we were sleeping, because we should have known then. When they started pulling out of the offices here we should have known then they were going to do something like that.

A: Do you think we should have prepared for it sooner than we did?

E: Yup. Yup. We should have had something to back them right up and stood in the doorway and wave good-bye. Yup. But what they did, they gave us a big party and they said, "oh we, we want to thank you for all you've done." They gave us a big party then they threw us out the front gate, and closed the front gate and good-bye. You know? Do you remember the big affair they had here? It was, it was a nice big party. It was! I was terrific! But we were still stupid. We were still sitting there, "oh aren't they wonderful throwing that big party for us!" And all of the time they had trucks going out the back with this machinery on it. We weren't very bright. We weren't.

A: Um, if you were to get in a position of say, the mayor, or someone who could control it, what would you have done when Sprague said they were going to move out?

E: Probably just what John did. I mean uh, there was nothing he could do. He called them a few nice choice names and [laughs]. But uh, you can't control a company to tell them they can't move. That's their business. That's their business. You might beg them please don't do it, but I mean they'll, they'll do it. That's their business. They thought they were going to move to the pie in the sky world, but they're finding out different now.

A: Um, what department, did you have specific departments that you worked in?

E: Yeah. I worked in Miscellaneous Papers on Brown Street.

A: All forty-one years?

E: Most of it. Yup, yup. I worked in Filters for a little while on, on Marshall Street. And then I worked in Dry Rolling at Beaver Street when I first started. But I hated that one. That's the one that you had to put the strip in. And then if you made a mistake you had to do it on your own time. [A: Umhm] Oh I hated that one. Uh, they, they sent me to Brown Street after that. They called me, when they called me back to work they sent me to Brown Street. And my boss on Brown Street come in and he said, "Evelyn you've just been recalled at Beaver Street." I started to cry. And he said, "what are you crying for?" And I said, "I don't want to go there." He says, "you don't have to." "You don't have to, you can stay right here." I said, "Oh thank God!" See I mean, see how naive I was. I just thought they owned me. But I know better today. That's why I say if I was the person I am today and I started in there forty-one years ago, I mean things would have been different.

[An unknown voice begins to ask follow-up questions]

U=Unknown voice

U: How did you first get involved in the union?

E: Well the guy that worked with me, he had been on the executive board the two years previous. So when they called for nominations, I said, "I'm going to try that this time." He said, "you'll never get elected." But I did, I beat him out. [Both laugh] There again, and I didn't even try that time. I didn't even try. But I beat him out and then he, he wouldn't try again. Once, once they said no to him that was it. Then he, "I give up" he says. So he had only had the one two year term.

U: Um, now when you were talking about the Logue, was that a unifying thing in the company that, so that you could see other people's progress and things that happen in their lives?

E: Yes, yes. Yup, yup. Yup, we used to swap stories between the plants and between the departments even. A lot of things we (--) On the other end of the building we didn't know what they were doing and they didn't know what we were doing. And the only way you do it was to read through the newspaper. So uh, that's when it came out. And then we'd have, like I say, we had, we had a party twice a year. One was a dinner and one was a picnic. And at each one we had skits. So we would try to see which plant could, could put on the best skit. So it was a competition, you know?

U: Oh wow! Oh did he send [unclear] to the soldiers in World War I and, or World War II?
[Comment unclear]

E: I have no idea. I have no idea. I would assume they would. I would assume they would.

A: [Comment unclear]

E: Uh huh, I would assume they would. But I never, I never really was involved in the staff that much to uh, say that I new they sent them.

U: Um, oh the picket money that you were talking about, now did the union pay people when they were on the picket line? Is that what it was?

E: Yes, uh huh. The International gives you so much strike fund money. [U: Uh huh] And of course you had to divide that up into all of the people that picket. And uh, it just so happened that we got twenty dollars a week. And I mean if there had been less people that would picket, we'd of got more. Or if there had been more, we'd of got less. So that's the way they figure it out. They give you a certain amount of money for strike fund. [U: Uh huh] And if your strike goes past the amount they give you, if it takes longer than what they figure, then they'll loan you the money. Then the local has to pay that back after.

U: Oh! And how did you (--) Would you raise that money through dues, or something like that?

E: Yeah. Our dues, so much goes in to the strike fund. I think it's three cents for each member goes into the strike fund.

U: And about how much were the dues when you were there?

E: Oh God, with Independent Union it was ten cents a week.

U: Oh wow!

E: Of course you didn't get much for ten cents either, because it was a company union. [U: Umhm] Right.

U: Um, now what was the IUE? What does, what do those initials stand for?

E: International Union of Electrical Workers. Now, now it's electrical, and furniture, and machine workers and all of that. They, they merged so many times. Yeah. Yup.

U: And about how many members were there when you first started, before it was a mandatory thing? Was there a lot of people?

E: Oh yeah. Yeah, people supported the union. Oh yeah. They knew they had to have a union. Yeah. Even the ten cent one was better than having nothing. [U: Umhm] But once they got the International then things started really picking up because they, they had the backing that way. You know? [Coughs] And it wasn't (--) Whatever the company told them that they were going to give them, you were, you were negotiating then, because you, you had power. But

otherwise you didn't, with the Independent Union you had no power. The only ones that had power was the presidents of the union. They all had new cars all of the time. So we all, we know what went on there. [Laughs] Uh huh. Umhm.

U: Um, I have another question here. Um, you said you enjoyed your work at Sprague?

E: Yup, yup. Uh, when I first went to Brown Street, of course we all were on day work. [U: Umhm] So every holiday we had a party. We'd decorate the break area in the theme of that party. And everybody would cook. So that time, that day that we had the party, all of sections were thrown out of the oven. No, nobody could put anything in the oven but food. And oh. [U: Wow.] Oh yeah, we had some great parties. Great parties. But along towards the end, forget it. Yeah.

U: Was that due to more of the uh, the workers attitude than the (--)

E: Well along towards the end we ended up with a twenty minute paid lunch hour. So twenty minutes don't give you a long time to get the food out of the oven and get it on the table and eat. You know? So uh, it sort of puts a damper on everything there. Yeah.

U: Um, now what type, types of jobs did you do in the different departments. I know you were talking about the um, the dry rolling, but what about filters and the other one that you mentioned, which was (--)

E: They, they were, they were just straight rolling. No tabs, no nothing. You just put your stuff on the, on the mandrel. Well you'd have to set what you call the eagle box on the machine. [U: Uh huh] And that is set to so many turns start with no foil in it. And then you'd set so many turns of foil. Then they'd be so many turns of foil again, just paper, no foil. And you had to set your eagle box so that it would cut there, there and start up again. Yeah. That was tricky.

U: It sounds like it.

E: That was tricky.

U: Now could you go through the different places that you worked again? Because I was a little confused.

E: Where did I work? I started up to Beaver Street on the top floor. Okay, then I went to Brown Street.

U: And what did you do there?

E: Rolling all the time, all the time. Yup, it was all rolling. And from Brown Street I signed in to the Filter Department. It's still rolling. And the Filter Department moved from Brown Street to Marshall Street. So there I went to Marshall Street. [Coughs] While I was a Marshall Street the strike came on. So when I got called back again I was the only one to be called back from the Filter Department to Beaver Street. So they kept telling me, "don't go back because they'll

kill you. Those girls up there are tough." I said, "so am I." So I went back. And uh, so then from there I got layed off again. As I said, they doubled the rates from Marshall Street to Beaver Street. So none of us could make our rate. So if you didn't make your rate you got layed off. And uh, from there they were closing Union Street. So they needed temporary help for six weeks. So I went there. So then after I got out of there I went back to Brown Street. And uh, that was where I retired from, Brown Street. [U: Hm.] Yeah. And I love it. It's just, it was just like home to me. It was just like (--) I said when I left it was just like leaving home. [Laughs] Yeah, it was just like leaving home. I was very comfortable there. Very comfortable, even with the new people that came in. Of course I was involved with the buy-out and we lost that to the management. And then the management they goofed up and they lost that. So then these people come in from Connecticut and they took over. But they're very nice people. [U: Hm] Nice people.

U: Um, now when you (--) You said that towards the end you did more work with the union than you actually did at Sprague? [E: Yeah, yeah] What kind of work were you doing in the union?

E: [Sigh] Trying to get everything running smoothe. You know, I mean helping, helping people get over their problems. Some people uh, they do something to get fired. You have to go to bat for them, get them their job back. Sometimes you have to go to the, the, DES Hearing to get them back. Get them unemployment and all that. There was a lot. There was a lot. That's why I said, I was so involved I felt like, they said, "what does it feel like to be retired?" And I said, "well, it feel like I was going a hundred miles an hour and all of a sudden the motor fell out of the car and here I am." [Makes sound] I don't like it. I don't like it. Maybe (--) I think (--) You know when they retire I think they ought to sort of decompress you. You know? Like you should maybe work half days, or something like that. [U: Oh, okay. Ease you out it.] Ease you out of the thing. Not just say, "okay, there you are, the seventeenth you're done." And I mean the eighteenth you're saying, "[whistles] what happened?" And I was, I was, I was really upset. I was really upset. And as I, I had my brother home. Him in the hospital with pneumonia and then my husband was sick. And then I really never got my bearings. And they, every time I meet somebody on the street they'd say, "how do you like retirement?" "I hate it! Oh God I wish I could go back to work." But uh, my husband can't understand that. Because he is not a person that likes to get involved with nothing. He don't want to get involved with nothing. He said, "I do what I want to do and that's it." And I say, "well great, but what about the other people that don't, they can't help themselves?" You know? I mean I know all of these people. I know all of the agencies. I know all of this. I can help them. But he said, "let them help themselves." I said, "well, that's all right. That's a good attitude to have, but I said, maybe sometimes you'll want to have to depend on somebody and they won't bother helping you either." So I mean, you know? You've got to be there. You've got to know what you're doing. So uh, I don't know. He can't figure me out and I can't figure him. I don't want to sit there and watch the garden grow. The hell with it. I can go to the Farmer's Market and pick it up. [Laughs] But uh, I'd rather be (-) They say, "well why don't you, why don't you like retirement?" I said, "because I'd rather be in there fighting to my elbows." I like that. I like that. I like to be involved. That's what they say, that uh, you're going to be in politics this year. You better believe it! So uh, of course Dan Bosley called me already. So I'll be on Dan's committee. So. And I imagine once Mike gets the nomination right we'll be out on trail with him. [U: Oh wow] Yup, so. I went to Bennington

for Mike. I didn't get to New Hampshire because my husband wasn't well and I couldn't go. But (--)

U: So you're pretty active right now then.

E: I'm pretty active right now. Yeah. Yup.

U: Um, would you go back if you had a chance today? Would you go back, or would you (--)

E: I don't, I don't think I could do it full time now, because I've been away. But if, if they wanted part time or something like that I wouldn't mind. I wouldn't mind. As I say, I like people and I like, I like my job and I, I like Brown Street especially. It's like running away from home. [U: Hm] But see, see how odd I am. [U: They don't understand] Yup, but uh, I really enjoyed myself. I can't say (--) I made a lot of friends. Made a few enemies too, but I mean uh! That's the breaks. You have to get a few along the way.

U: Um, I think I'm all through [rest of comment unclear].

A: Okay, well thank you very much.

E: Well it was nice talking to you girls.

Tape ends.